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NSC FOR ABRAMS

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LONDON FOR HKANONA AND POL - Goldrich
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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (04/29) - ABBAS'S FIRST
100 DAYS IN OFFICE

TOP STORIES:

The dailies continued to carry front-page coverage on Russian President Putin's visit to the area, highlighting reports that his call to hold an international peace conference is fading away and has turned instead into a suggestion for a meeting of a group of experts.

Al-Quds front-paged a report that President Bush's popularity has plunged dramatically in the first 100 days of his second term, in part because of "congressional battles that have stalled his main initiatives."

The dailies front-paged reports, quoting American officials as saying that the U.S. is planning to sell Israel 100 bunker-busting bombs. Al-Quds reported that the Arab countries are concerned that Israel may carry out a military strike against the Iranian nuclear weapons program.

Al-Ayyam and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida published a public opinion poll conducted by Birzeit University showing that 33 percent of those surveyed believe that President Abbas has delivered on one third of his election campaign promises and that 84 percent of the respondents support holding the legislative elections in July as scheduled.

COMMENTARIES AND POLITICAL CARTOON:

Rajab Abu Sariya commented in Al-Ayyam that after 100 days in office, President Abbas's main challenge has been and will remain the political process and Israel's failure to fulfill its obligations.

Al-Quds ran a political cartoon depicting President Bush, dressed as a Roman soldier, brandishing a sword as he rides in a chariot being pulled by a blindfolded horse,

representing the world.

SELECTED HEADLINES AND PHOTO CAPTIONS

AL-QUDS

"Putin sees an opportunity to end the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. His suggestion to hold an international conference on peace turns into a `meeting of experts.'"

"Washington plans to sell Israel bunker-busting bombs."

Main photo caption: "A picture from the archive showing two soldiers mounting a laser-guided missile onto a fighter plane, the same kind Washington is planning to sell to Israel."

AL-AYYAM

"Israeli plan to build a wall in the middle of Hebron that will confiscate 7,000 dunums."

"Hundreds of radical Jews storm Al-Aqsa."

"Putin discusses political developments with Abbas."

Main photo caption: "Israeli soldiers and undercover agents arrest a man in Bel'in (north west of Jerusalem)."

AL-HAYAT AL-JADIDA

"Elderly woman dies as a result of x-ray security checking equipment used at Rafah entry point."

Main photo caption: "Israeli soldiers and undercover agents drag a man during an anti-wall demonstration in Bel'in yesterday."

BLOCK QUOTES:

Rajab Abu Sariya commented in independent Al-Ayyam under the headline, "After 100 days in presidency, Abu Mazin still facing a long road" (4/29): "Not many people have bothered to take the time to evaluate what Mahmud Abbas, the elected president, has achieved in his first 100 days in office. There are many reasons for that, but the most important is probably the fact that these people have realized that Abbas's duties are extremely complex and involve both the political and internal levels. [...] Obviously, the main challenge facing the Palestinian Authority in the past 100 days of Abbas's term, and which will persist even after 100 months., is the political situation. Despite the importance of any accomplishments achieved at the internal level, the failure to achieve tangible and specific progress in accordance with the national program will certainly not be enough to pressure the Israeli side into recognizing our national rights."

PEARCE